

KID KNIEVEL!

USER'S MANUAL

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If you're going to be the World's Greatest Daredevil, there is only one rule: *Everything* you do must be EXTREME. Oh, and AWESOME. It must be AWESOMELY EXTREME. It must be... **AWESTREME!**

Well, Kid Knievel plans to be the World's Greatest Daredevil*. So...

He can't just get out of bed in the morning; he has to be *catapulted* out of bed! He can't just brush his teeth; he has to *turbo-brush* them with an industrial floor buffer and a fire hose! He can't just eat a Pudd-N-Snak® at lunch time; he has to *dive six hundred feet* into a *piranha-filled tank* of Pudd-N-Snak®! He can't just talk to the pretty girl next door, he...

Well actually he can't talk to the pretty girl next door at all. Crush-Induced Brainfreeze, you know how it is. But he *can* stage a death-defying stunt involving a flaming hoop, a jet-powered shopping cart and a half-dozen starved bobcats in front of her house in an attempt to impress her. And we all know how much girls love shrieking cats and the smell of burnt jumpsuit. Ooo, baby.

Yes, Kid endeavors to bring the "Knievel Touch" to every aspect of his life, from morning to night, from home to school, from jumping the school bus with a rocket-bike to limping into the Emergency Room with a sheepish expression. By the way, if Kid gets his Emergency Room Rewards Card punched one more time he gets a free appendectomy. Score!

So what's the world of "Kid Knievel" like? Well, apart from his relentless Knievalization of everyday activities, Kid's life is pretty ordinary. He goes to school, he has friends, he

* Kid would tell you that he already IS the World's Greatest Daredevil. It's just that the world doesn't know it yet.

watches TV. He doesn't, like, fight crime or anything; he fights with his older brother. The show is on the reality end of the reality/fantasy continuum. I mean, it's not a *documentary*, but if Kid goes off a cliff, he doesn't hang there in midair until he looks down – the laws of physics may be bent, but not broken. Kid may have more jet-powered thingies than are strictly possible for an actual elementary school student, and he may be capable of taking more physical punishment than any non-cartoon human being, but the series is still set in the real world. No technology that's totally outside the sphere of modern science (Rocket-pack: Yes! Time machine: No!), no magic, no talking animals, no flap-your-arms-and-fly. Comprende?

Episodes will be stories about typical preteen situations, as faced by a decidedly *atypical* preteen, the twelve-year-old force of nature known as KID KNIEVEL. It's real life, Knievalified.

We must always remember the Kid Knieval Kredo: *JUST OVERDO IT*. Although our starting point is reality, and the problems faced by our characters are recognizably reality-based, we must always strive to *take things too far*. OVERDO! We will present simple stories with mega-buttloads of physical/visual gags. OVERDO! If the kids say they like the show because it's extreme, then by cracky, WE WILL BE EXTREME*! Kid won't miss school just 'cause of a cold, it'll be the *Zombie Flu!* Sam's Science Fair project won't just make a mess, it'll *destroy the school!* Gunther won't just blow milk out his nose, he'll blow *a whole pizza, six chicken nuggets and a butterscotch parfait!*

OVERDO!!

* From Merriam-Webster Online: EXTREME: Going to great or exaggerated lengths; exceeding the ordinary, usual, or expected. Synonyms: see KNIEVELESQUE.

LEAD CHARACTERS

KID

Unafraid of anything except failure (and for some reason spiders), Kid is fiercely determined to be the World's Greatest Daredevil. Kid is small for a twelve-year-old – really, he's even small for a six-year-old – but he's not about to let that stop him. No sir! So what if he needs a stool to reach the sink? He's determined to prove to everyone that he is as awesome as HE already knows he is! Kid's stunts may not work out, but Kid never gives up. And he's *cool*; he doesn't crash his helicopter-scooter because he's a *spaz*, he crashes it because he makes one tiny miscalculation. Usually this tiny miscalculation is that he mistakes the impossible for the possible. But he's still pretty dang slick – he can zing a CD into the player from fifty feet, he can put on his shoes by back-flipping into them, he can toss his helmet across the room to land perfectly on a hat rack. Well, he *could*, if it weren't for the fact that he NEVER takes off his helmet. Unless there's a spider in it, then he *might* take it off. Did I mention he's scared of spiders? *Really* scared. Totally, irrationally terrified. There's probably a story behind it. And perhaps one day we'll learn that story, in a very special two-part episode.

GUNTHER

Thick, both physically and mentally. Gunther is totally gung-ho about anything that doesn't involve using his brain*. He is incredibly eager to help, which is a mixed blessing, since he's also incredibly inept at providing said help. Gunther is so excited just to have a friend that he'll do anything for Kid. Even things Kid doesn't want him to do, like "fix" his bike or "organize" his collection of hospital wristbands. Gunther usually functions as videographer for Kid's death-defying deeds. Or rather, *malfunctions*, since he's so easily distracted that he's more likely to videotape a nearby squirrel or butterfly or shiny pebble than the actual stunt that's going on. Gunther's response to anything he doesn't understand is "What happened?" As you might expect, he winds up saying that a lot.

* In Gunther's case, the list of non-brain-using activities includes – roughly speaking – everything.

SAM

Sam is a mechanical genius, with the kind of absolute confidence in her opinions that comes only from not listening to other people. In contrast to Kid and Gunther, Sam is – for the most part – cool and unemotional. She has the uncanny ability to take any assortment of old broken junk and turn it into a rocket-powered something-or-other that will *almost* make it over whatever Kid is trying to jump before exploding and injuring Kid in a highly entertaining way. Yes, Sam is the master of “Junk-Tech.” Sam’s response is always the same: “I can fix that.” Among our three leads, Sam is the only one who has a pretty good idea what the risk level is of any stunt Kid may undertake (i.e.: very, very high). But she’s generally so eager to see if her latest engineering marvel will work that she’s willing to accept the danger. Especially since it’s not, y’know, danger to *her*.

On a side note, Sam has a seemingly limitless supply of cousins in town, who come in handy whenever she, Kid and Gunther need adult assistance. If Kid needs a crane, Sam has a cousin in construction. If Kid needs a panther, Sam has a cousin who owns an exotic pet store. “I can get you that. I got a cousin at the nuclear power plant.”

NOTES ON THE INTERACTION OF KID, GUNTHER AND SAM

Kid is the clear and unquestioned leader of the three. Sam may be smarter than him, but she's interested in solving the technical problems his outlandish plans present, not in coming up with plans of her own. And Gunther is, essentially, a puppy. Puppies don't lead. Anyway, even if Sam and Gunther were General MacArthur and Charlemagne, Kid would probably still boss them around – he's a pretty forceful personality.

As fiercely determined as he is, Kid still sometimes has moments of self-doubt, and owing to his tendency to OVERDO everything, he can reach truly profound depths of misery at these times. Sam would be sympathetic and try to help by pointing out that these moments never last long ("An average of one point four two minutes, to be precise"), but it's Gunther who'll actually provide the emotional support needed to lift Kid back up to his usual level of maniacal confidence. Gunther's lack of troublesome "thoughts" allows him to clearly see what emotions are at play and respond appropriately. Again, kind of like a puppy.

Kid's relationship with Gunther is very much a boy and his dog. If you think this means that Kid mistreats or undervalues Gunther, I hope you don't have a dog. The two of them are like brothers (except they don't try to strangle each other). Kid values Gunther highly and totally respects him; he'd take a bullet for him in a hot second. Meanwhile, Gunther worships Kid as a god and gets super excited when it's time to go walkies.

Kid and Sam share a single quality: an utter contempt for the laws of physics. So the laws of physics say it's impossible to jump Common Valley Canyon on a unicycle, do they? Poppycock! We shall do it! Kid and Sam need each other. Kid's dream is to become the World's Greatest Daredevil, so he needs a good technician. And Sam's dream is to become the World's Greatest Daredevil's Technician. Also, without Kid, who would test Sam's junk-tech creations? Not her, that's for sure. Those things are dangerous.

Sam and Gunther get along tremendously well despite having a gap of about 200 IQ points between them. Maybe it's because they don't step on each other's territory, maybe it's because neither expects the other to change. Or maybe it's because they're both fascinated by how the other's mind works. Gunther sees the inner workings of Sam's brain as a magical Wizard's workshop, and Sam sees the inner workings of Gunther's brain as half mysterious wilderness, half 99-Cent Store*.

* I don't know what this means either. But you get the idea, right?

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

BRAD

Kid's older brother Brad is a bully and a jerk. He treats Kid like penicillin treats bacteria... except when their parents are watching – then he's as sweet as frosting. Naturally, Brad loves his younger brother on some level. It's just that the level is very, very, very, very deep. REALLY deep. Like, "Journey to the Center of the Earth" deep.

KID'S DAD

Kid's Dad is a safety inspector, both by profession and by nature. Kid's stunts never fail to both horrify and perplex him. Indeed, horror and perplexity are the emotions most familiar to Kid's Dad. If he had his way, Kid would never leave the house, and would wear a jumpsuit made of soft pillows at all times.

KID'S MOM

Kid's Mom was a real firecracker in her youth, and marrying Kid's staid and cautious Dad was part of a concerted effort on her part to settle down. It worked out pretty well, but she still has her hidden wild side, and though she's outwardly opposed to Kid's daredevil aspirations, it's clear that on the inside she's rooting for him.

ASHLEY CHRISTINA

Kid's "little" sister is actually taller than him, despite being much younger. She wears her ballerina outfit *all the time*, and has the creepily-perfect look of a child beauty pageant winner. Ashley Christina refers to everything not immediately of interest to her as "dumb." So boys are dumb, stunts are dumb, skateboards are dumb, things that aren't pretty or that *are* pretty but belong to someone else are dumb, etc. Ashley Christina is always getting all up in Kid's business, and never misses an opportunity to spoil his plans. She makes all the other "pesky little sisters" in the world look like rank amateurs.

SCARLETT

Scarlett is Kid's archrival, a twelve-year-old masked female daredevil who dresses all in red. Kid and Scarlett have kind of a Batman/Catwoman thing going on; they're intensely competitive but they still kind of fancy each other. Scarlett clearly has more available funds than Kid; her vehicles work better and tend not to be made from baling wire and old typewriter parts. But when it comes to pain tolerance and absolute refusal to quit, no one beats Kid. Sometimes Scarlett will challenge Kid to perform some difficult feat. Other times Kid will show up to do a stunt and find that she has beaten him to it. Although Scarlett's true identity is unknown, Sam is pretty sure that she's the preposterously wealthy Antoinette Fairlop-Barkingside (see below). Who else would have enough money to pay for those cars and bikes of hers? But Kid and Gunther think this is ridiculous. The rich girl? No way!

WADE

To Kid, Wade is the coolest adult in existence. So what if he's twenty-seven and still lives with his mom? He sleeps 'til noon, he's got a wicked-cool muscle car, he's in a band, and he works at the amusement park! AWESOME! Sometimes he brings home bumper cars to fix them in his garage, and he lets kids ride 'em down the sidewalk! AWESOME! He calls Kid "little hombre," and actually takes his daredevil aspirations seriously. *AWESOME!*

BRIANNA, THE GIRL NEXT DOOR

The light of Kid's life, Brianna is a fourteen-year-old stone fox. She is totally unaware of Kid's existence, and spends about 99% of her time talking animatedly to someone on her cell phone. In her presence, Kid cannot speak. Indeed, he can barely move, sometimes for hours afterward.

ANTOINETTE P. FAIRLOP-BARKINGSIDE

The "P" stands for "insanely wealthy." The Fairlop-Barkingside estate comprises just over 50% of Common Valley's total acreage. It is, of course, walled. Antoinette's great-

grandfather invented the copyright symbol, and his family still gets a royalty every time it's used. Antoinette isn't a bad kid, she's just really isolated and lonely. And she's got a *massive* crush on Kid. Unfortunately, Kid is totally uninterested, despite the fact that Antoinette was voted ten of the ten most beautiful women in the world by *Beaut* Magazine (a publication of Fairlop-Barkingside Press). Every time Kid rejects her, Antoinette brings the full force of billions of dollars to bear on exacting revenge. But her revenge is never particularly violent – just really expensive. Like the time she paid the World Astronomy Coalition to officially rename the planet Mars. Now at school when they list the planets they say, “Mercury, Venus, Earth, Kidisabigfatdork, Jupiter...”

COUSIN KYLE

Kid's cousin Kyle is the embodiment of everything Kid loathes. He puts on puppet shows. He dislikes wheeled things. He finds tiddly-winks a bit too intense, and on anything higher than a thick carpet he gets a nosebleed. Kyle and Kid are the same age, so when he comes to visit they are forced to hang out. Un-freakin'-bearable!

BILLY STUMPS

The World's Fourth Greatest Daredevil*! Billy is Kid's idol. Sure, he's missing an arm, but that just proves he's the real thing! Kid's dream is to someday shake Billy's hand. And he'd better do it soon, while there's still one left.

* Numbers one through three are, in Kid's opinion, phonies.

LOCATIONS

THE CUL-DE-SAC

The cul-de-sac is where Kid's house is, at the end of the Common Valley Heights development, above the Recycling Center. It is a sizeable circle of concrete, surrounded by a ring of once-identical-but-now-quirkily-remodeled houses. The "cul" is where Kid stages many of his stunts. Every single square inch of the cul-de-sac's cement has, at one time or another, scraped off some of Kid's skin.

KID'S ROOM

Kid's room is in the basement (his choice – more privacy). Apart from the industrial chic of the ducts and boiler, the best thing about it is that, since the house is on a hill, it has doors that open straight onto the backyard, which slopes steeply down toward the Recycling Center and the inevitable painful wipeout. Kid has built a fake bush in front of the doors that's supposed to swing open à la the Batcave, but it never works and he always winds up either slamming into it or crashing through it. Kid's room is crammed full of cool stuff, including his collection of casts and a wardrobe of twenty identical jumpsuits (plus some jumpsuit-styled pajamas and a custom made bathing-jumpsuit).

THE GULCH

Right behind Gunther's cottage-like house with its charming décor from Norswegany (or wherever his huge, Viking-like parents are from) is a small sandstone canyon that's almost invisible until you're right on top of it. Getting down into the Gulch is tricky, so nobody ever goes there. Except, of course, Kid, Gunther and Sam. Sam has devised a system of pulleys to lower herself. Kid always has to come up with some daredevilish way of getting down there. And Gunther generally gets down into the Gulch the same way he first discovered it: by plummeting artlessly. The Gulch is Kid, Gunther and Sam's base of operations, their secret headquarters, their Batcave. Don't ever call it a clubhouse, okay? Seriously. That is so uncool. The Gulch is furnished with assorted junk – a cast-off sofa, an old recliner, assorted manikin parts, etc. The Gulch empties

out into an aqueduct at its lower end, which provides limitless possibilities for misuse of wheeled things.

SAM'S GARAGE

Sam's Mom and Dad are scientists of some sort (Physics? Cybernetics? It's a little hard to pin down), and are both incurable tinkerers like Sam. They have remodeled and retrofitted their once-normal house in all kinds of peculiar ways, attaching odd bits here and there, and the place now bears an uncanny resemblance to a crashed space station. Sam's room is in what was once the garage, though it's now been sort of absorbed by the house's weird expansion. Sam's garage is where she builds her various "projects," and is therefore always cluttered with odds and ends she collects from the Recycling Center; old washing machine motors, rusty chains, sundry computer innards, bike wheels, parakeet cages, etc. Anyone visiting will at some point be warned, "Don't touch that. I mean it." Inevitably, Gunther fails to heed these warnings. Chaos ensues.

BATTLESNACKS

A Viking-themed snack bar/market shaped like a giant battleaxe stuck in the ground. It's run by Gunther's parents, who themselves are rather Viking-themed. With their burly physiques, red hair, and nigh-incomprehensible Swedemarkian (or whatever) accents, Gunter's Mom and Dad undoubtedly look more like invading Norsemen than any actual Norse invaders ever did, especially with the horned helmets that are part of the standard Battlesnacks uniform. It is inevitable that some day one or more of our lead characters will wind up working part-time in this place, and will be forced to wear the "horns of embarrassment." Kid would have to wear the horned helmet over his own helmet, which would be extra-awkward.

PHIL'S PHUN PHAIR

This rundown amusement park/mini-golf/arcade/flea market is the most awesome place in the known universe to Kid, Gunther and Sam. Certified cool adult Wade works there as a mechanic, fighting an ongoing battle to keep the archaic rides from launching kids

into a low orbit. Phil's Phun Phair is a popular hangout for kids, much in the way a mall might be in some towns.

GERONIMO MIDDLE SCHOOL

A perfectly good middle school that just happens to be on the edge of a cliff and next to a graveyard, thus offering plenty of "dare" opportunities.